THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) to (c) Government is taking steps to improve the export infrastructure to increase trade from the North Eastern region. Under the Assistance to States for Development of Export Infrastructure and Allied Activities (ASIDE) Scheme, the Central Government provides 10% of the total outlay for developing export infrastructure in the North Eastern region. Border trade with Myanmar is taking place through Moreh in Manipur. Zokhwathar in Mizoram has been inaugurated as a border trade point and Rs. 4.22 crore have been released to the Border Roads Organization under ASIDE Scheme for construction of a composite building at Zokhawthar. A border trade mart is also being set up at Sherathang in Sikkim for commencing Border Trade between India and China through Nathu La.

Import of gold and silver

1766. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Minister proposes to allow import of gold and silver directly by individual and small jewellers; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and by when it will be permitted?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) and (b) A proposal is under consideration of the Ministry of Finance for enlarging the scope of the entities allowed to import gold so as to include companies with a net worth of Rs. 25 Crores in the jewellery business, apart from the presently nominated agencies & Five Star Export Houses.

Negotiations for opening up of global farm goods market

1767. SHRI MURLI DEORA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether negotiations to open up the global farm goods market further, are not progressing satisfactorily and if so, the reasons therefor;

(b) whether developed countries are primarily responsible for large distortions and protectiveness in the agricultural sector and if so, the details thereof; and